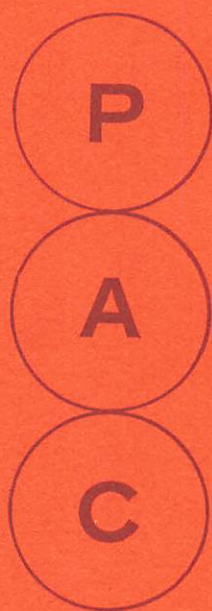


# INTRODUCE YOURSELF TO TRANSACTIONAL ANALYSIS



A TA  
PRIMER

RC  
489  
T7  
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11

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Published by the  
SAN JOAQUIN TA INSTITUTE  
2732 PACIFIC AVENUE  
STOCKTON, CALIFORNIA 95204

4th Edition—July, 1974

Theology Library  
SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
AT CLAREMONT  
California

Distributed by  
TRANSACTIONAL PUBLS  
1772 VALLEJO ST.  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA 94123

PRICE LIST: (California residents add 6% sales tax.)

1 Copy . . . . .	\$1.25
2-9 Copies . . . . .	\$1.00
10-99 Copies . . . . .	\$ .90
100 or more Copies . . . . .	\$ .75

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## PREFACE

This primer is an elementary description of the basic principles of transactional analysis (TA). It may prove useful in acquainting you with the subject in a preliminary way, before you read the more advanced works on transactional analysis, or before you enter a TA group.

Our intent was to use a language of a high enough technical order to sustain the interest of educated adults and yet be simple enough for boys and girls of junior high school age.

Our first edition was for the young men at the California Youth Authority's O. H. Close School for Boys, Stockton, as part of the Youth Center Research Project. This edition is for any reader interested in TA.

We hope to advance TA as a method that people can use for individual growth and for the improvement of our social institutions.

We acknowledge our indebtedness to: Carl F. Jesness, Ph.D., director of the project; Robert L. Goulding, M.D., and Mary Goulding, MSW, consultants to the project; the late Eric Berne, M.D., the originator of transactional analysis; and our colleagues in the International TA Association.

Most of the ideas expressed in this primer originally appeared in works by Dr. Eric Berne, his associates, and students. On the last page is a list of suggested readings for those who want to learn more about TA.

The International Transactional  
Analysis Association (ITAA)  
1772 Vallejo Street  
San Francisco, Calif. 94123

The ITAA is an international organization devoted to the advancement of transactional analysis (TA) as a science and profession in the public interest.

A world-wide membership is comprised of professionals and non-professionals from a variety of specialties. The ITAA is responsible for setting professional standards for training, and for the ethical practice of TA.

It provides an annual directory of membership and affiliated study groups, seminars, and institutes. It publishes the quarterly *Transactional Analysis Journal*, to inform the membership of current studies, issues, and actions of the organization. ITAA holds two annual conferences to exchange scientific findings, and review social and professional issues.

You may become a regular member of the ITAA after completing a TA introductory course (TA 101) that meets the established teaching standards (instruction by a Teaching Member or under the supervision of a Teaching Member).

# 1

## WHAT YOU ARE AS A PERSON

On the cover of this booklet is a diagram of a human being. Everyone has three parts, or persons, within himself: a *Parent*, an *Adult*, and a *Child*. These parts are known technically as *ego states*. The Parent in you feels and behaves in the same ways your mother or father, or whoever raised you, did. Your Parent can be critical, or helping, or both. The Adult is the part of you that figures things out by looking at the facts. Your Adult is your "computer," the part that uses facts to make decisions. The Child in you is what you were when you were little. Your Child has the same feelings and ways of behaving you had when you were very young. He can be "natural"; that is, act on his own, not under the influence of your internal Parent; or he can be "adapted" so as to please your internal Parent. Each of your three states has his own ways of feeling and behaving.

Often the three disagree with one another, and you feel part of you wants one thing, and another part of you wants another. Usually the best way to solve a problem like that is to have your Adult decide. One of the purposes of a TA group is to get all three parts of you working well together.

Your three ego states are like voices in you. The Parent is the one who says things like, "You must," "You should," "You should not," or, "Don't." Slogans like, "If you want something done right, do it yourself," "A woman's place is in the home," "Boys will be boys," "You can't win," etc., are usually from the Parent. Your Child may say, "I want what I want when I want it," or, "Try and make me." The Adult in you prefers to operate on facts, not feelings. He says things like, "Here is how this works." Listen to the voices within you and you will "hear" your Parent, Adult, and Child. You may not always hear words, but you will get messages from the feelings within you. All of us have a Little Kid part of us. Grownups can be kids again, and kids can be Adults.

A young boy, after hitting an old man while trying to rob him, said to his probation officer, "I knew exactly what I was doing; I shouldn't have done it; but I felt like doing it anyhow." Take this sentence apart, and see if you can decide which part of it probably came from his Adult, which part from his Parent, and which part from his Child.

be contaminated by your Parent. That is, your Adult may take what your mother said as fact, without really checking it out. Your Adult can also be contaminated by your Child. For example, if you think that people are against you when they really are not, it may be the scared Little Kid in you that is messing up your Adult thinking.

You may allow one of your three ego states to stay in control too much of the time. Then you are "constant Parent," or "constant Adult," or "constant Child," at the expense of being a whole human being. This problem is called *exclusion*, in which you shut off, or exclude, two of your ego states.

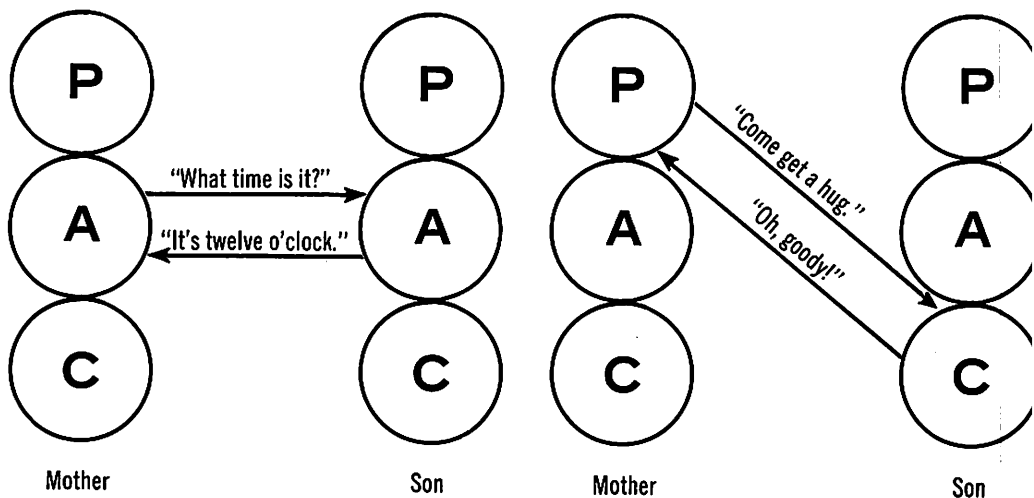
Important words: **ego state**, **Parent**, **Adult**, **Child**, **contamination**, **exclusion**.

## 2

### YOUR TRANSACTIONS WITH OTHERS

The word *transaction* helps to describe how people talk or act with one another. It means an *exchange* between two people. It can be an exchange of friendly words, angry blows, presents, or bullets. When you

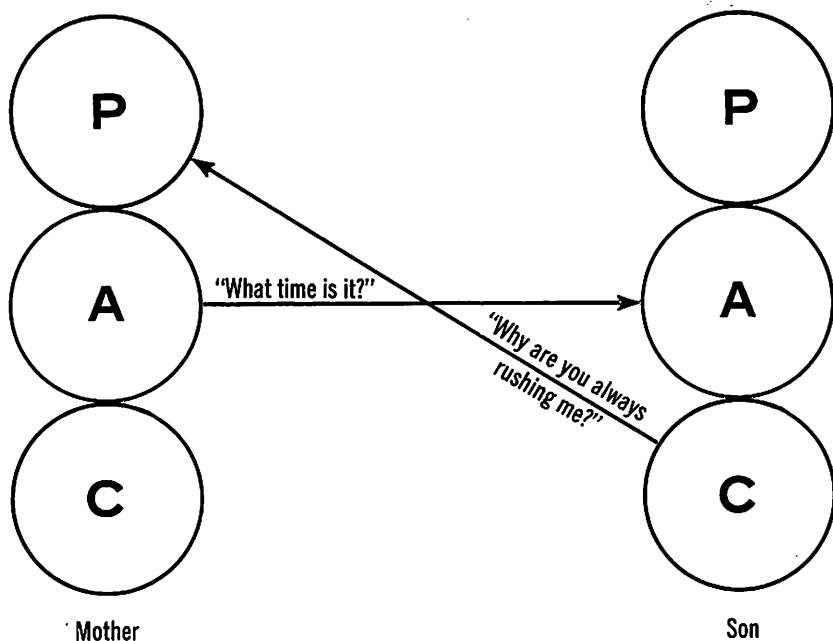
#### DIAGRAM II



say "hello" to someone, and he says "hello" back, the exchange of *hellos* is called a *transaction*, a bit of social business. The Parent, Adult, or Child in the other person will be answering the Parent, Adult, or Child in you, whoever in you said "hello." All conversations are series of transactions, one exchange after another. These exchanges can be Adult to Adult, Adult to Child, Adult to Parent, Parent to Parent, Parent to Adult, Parent to Child, Child to Parent, Child to Adult, or Child to Child.

Diagram II shows examples of simple transactions. The lines with arrows tell in what direction the communication is going. Notice that the lines are parallel. They do not cross. Suppose a mother says to her son, "What time is it?" (Adult of mother). He says, "It's twelve o'clock" (Adult of son). This is a simple, *uncrossed transaction*, Adult to Adult. If the Parent in the mother says, "Come get a hug," and the Child in him says, "Oh, goody!" the lines in the diagram are still parallel,

### DIAGRAM III



so the transaction is straightforward and unbroken. There is no rule saying Adult-to-Adult transactions are the best kind. Two or more people



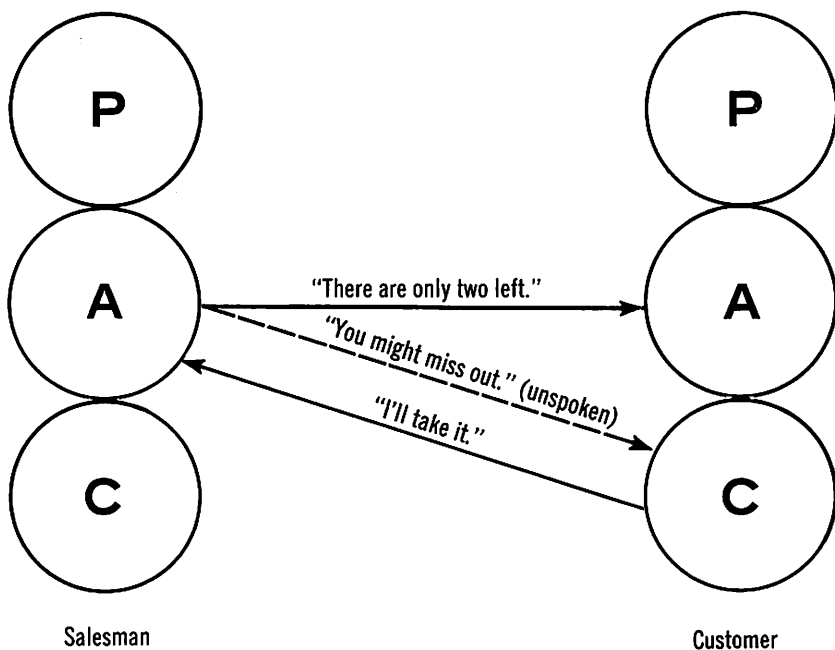
talking to one another can switch from one ego state to another easily, with no break in the conversation, and with all the transactions remaining uncrossed.

Sometimes the lines, though, become crossed, as Diagram III shows. *Crossed transactions* result in a breakdown of communication.

The diagram shows a mother talking Adult to Adult. She asks, in an uncritical way, "What time is it?" but her son, instead of answering with his Adult, "It's twelve o'clock," says angrily, from his Child, "Why are you always rushing me?" The communication about time immediately breaks down and switches to a discussion about whether the mother is rushing him. The transaction is crossed.

Another kind of transaction is called *ulterior*, one that has a hidden message in it. For example, in Diagram IV, an appliance salesman is talking to a customer who obviously admires the product. The salesman says straightforwardly, "This is our best model, but there are only two

## DIAGRAM IV



left." He may be telling the truth, but his Adult is talking not only to the Adult of the customer, but is also sending a secret message to the Child. The customer's Child answers to himself, "Gee, I might miss out," and aloud says, "I'll take it." The Adult of the salesman politely directed himself to the Adult of the customer, but he "hooked the Child" by sending a secret message so he could quickly close the sale.

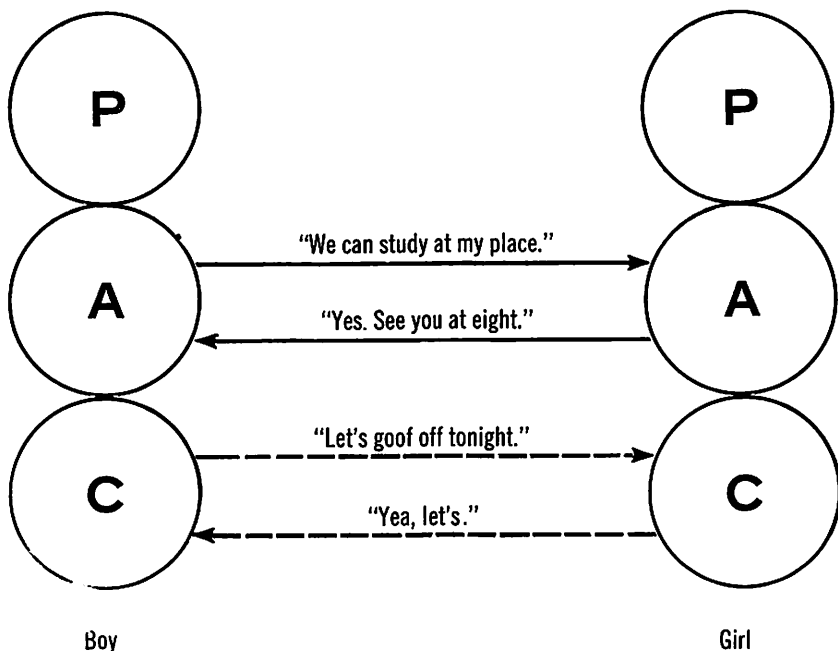
The salesman in Diagram IV works an angle from his Adult. His ulterior transaction is *angular*. Another kind is called *duplex*, or double, in which two ego states in *both* persons are active. For example, a boy may say to his girl friend, from his Adult to her Adult, "We can study at my place tonight." She answers from her Adult to his Adult, "Yes. See you at eight." Someone overhearing this conversation might hear it as a straightforward exchange of information, and miss the Child-to-Child secret exchange, which is, let's say (only the two of them know for sure):

"Let's goof off tonight."

"Yea, let's."

The behavior that follows a duplex transaction (see Diagram V) will depend more on the secret message than on the spoken message. What's

## DIAGRAM V



really going on in an ulterior transaction may have nothing to do with what's said aloud.

Not all ulterior transactions are dishonest. People commonly carry on two conversations at once without being sneaky. For example, two young lovers may talk in words about their homework assignment while their eyes communicate something quite different from algebra.

See if you can analyze the following transaction:

Brother: "Give me a hand with this, will you?"

Sister: "You're not my boss."

What do you think might have happened here? What do the lines in this transaction probably look like? There are several possibilities. Are your communications usually uncrossed, or are they crossed? If they are crossed, your communications will break down.

Important words: **transaction; uncrossed, crossed, ulterior, angular, and duplex transactions.**

# 3

## YOU NEED STROKES

Everyone needs *strokes*. A stroke is a pat on the back, or a word of recognition. A kick on the shins is also a stroke. Everyone needs to get and to give some kind of stroking, pleasant or unpleasant. A child would rather be spanked than completely ignored. A stroke that helps you feel you are OK is called a *positive stroke*. One that tells you you are not-OK is a *negative stroke*. Loving is positive stroking. Hating is negative stroking.

A stroke given to you for what you *do* rather than for what you *are* is a *conditional stroke*. For example, if your father says to you, "I like you when you do as you're told," he is giving you a stroke on the condition that you give him something in return. He is not stroking you for what you are. When a stroke is given to you for what you *are* rather than for what you *do*, as when your mother says, "I love you because you are you," her stroke is *unconditional*. It has no strings attached.

When you are given strokes only for doing "good things" and not for being who you are, you may soon resent doing "good things," and

react in a negative way, perhaps with anger. Everyone seems to need much unconditional stroking. You probably prefer to be told that you are OK for what you are, rather than only for what you do.

Strokes are necessary for physical and mental health. Without strokes, infants may die, because their urge to live decreases. Parents can stunt the healthy growth of their baby by *discounting* his need for strokes. When a mother repeatedly ignores her crying infant and says, "Oh, he always bawls like that," she is discounting him. He may whimper himself back to sleep, his need for stroking unmet.

As you grow up you become more willing to take word stroking instead of the physical stroking you had when you were a little baby. You still need and want physical stroking, but you often have to settle for word (symbolic) stroking. Stroking for *being* is more important than stroking for *doing*. This is an important lesson. You need not feel ashamed to ask for positive stroking. A good question to ask yourself is, "What kind of strokes do I make sure I get, and how do I make sure I get them?" One of the best ways to get positive strokes is to give them.

The kind of strokes you give and get depends on how the Child in you feels about yourself and about others. How you feel about yourself and others is called a *basic position*. There are four positions.

1. I'M OK; YOU'RE OK. This is the healthy position, the "get-on-with," winner's position.
2. I'M OK; YOU'RE NOT-OK. This is the position of a Child who distrusts others. It is the "get-rid-of" position (by ignoring, divorcing, or, in the extreme, killing).
3. I'M NOT-OK; YOU'RE OK. This is the position of the Child who usually feels unworthy or depressed. It is the "get-away-from" position (by withdrawing, running away, or committing suicide—gradually or abruptly).
4. I'M NOT-OK; YOU'RE NOT-OK. This is the "get-nowhere" position of a Child who feels he can't win, that life just isn't worth it. He may even go crazy to get put away to escape it.

If the Child in you feels not-OK, you probably learned to settle for more negative than positive strokes. You may turn down positive strokes, feeling you don't deserve them. You may even go out of your way to collect negative strokes. Although you want compliments, you may feel uncomfortable getting them. When you do get one, you may think the person giving it is just being polite, or wants something.

If you feel OK about yourself you probably draw on a *stroke reserve*. Having received plenty of positive strokes, you have a ready supply to give and to enjoy for yourself. Being open to positive strokes, you get more, and have more time and energy to be a tolerant Parent, a competent Adult, and a fun-loving Child.

Important words: **stroke; positive, negative, unconditional, and conditional strokes; basic position, discounting, stroke reserve.**

## 4

### YOUR STAMP COLLECTIONS AND RACKETS

This lesson is about *trading stamps* and *rackets*. Collecting trading stamps in TA language means saving up feelings until you have enough to cash in for a prize. You know about the stamps you get when you buy something at the store. You can save them up to cash in for a prize or gift. In about the same way you can use almost anything that happens to you as a trading stamp. For example, if a person does not say “thank you,” you may collect a stamp. You can save up insults or hurts from someone until you feel you have enough to trade in for one big punch on his jaw. You can choose to feel that after all you’ve had to take from him you have earned the “right” to hit him. That is, you have saved up enough stamps for one guilt-free act of revenge.

*Brown stamps* are for bad feelings, *gold stamps* for good feelings. You may want to cash in a full page or full book of brown stamps for one free temper tantrum, or a day off “sick.” You may need many books for a free divorce. The *free* means free of guilt, at least for awhile. It means you feel you now have the “right” to do what you might not ordinarily do.

You can save up your good feelings to use as gold stamps. If you have done something well you may use the good feeling as an excuse to relax, or to have yourself a good time. If you do this you are a “gold-stamp” collector. People in whom the Child feels he is OK, and others are OK, too, do not have to collect either brown or gold stamps. They do not need excuses for what they do or feel.

Here is an example of a little girl who is shopping for a brown stamp, and a mother who could have avoided the uproar simply by taking the daughter, after the opening remark, into her arms.

"Mommy, I don't think you really love me."

"Why of course I love you. Don't be silly."

"How can you love me when you get so mad at me?"

"I get mad at you *because* I love you. I want you to learn to do things right."

"You mean you only love me when I *do* stuff for you?"

"You know that's not so."

"It is too, and I hate you."

"Now listen here, young lady, I've heard about enough."

"I knew it. You *don't* love me. *Nobody* loves me."

"I've *had* it. The way you're behaving, who could love you?"

This little girl's Child went out of her way to collect "unloved" feelings.

Stamp collectors, especially brown-stamp collectors, have a hard time throwing their stamps away. The Child wants to cash them in, not forget them. Questions like the following may help you see if you are a stamp collector:

Do you sometimes sulk when you don't get your own way?

Do you put things off, and then feel guilty for not doing them?

Do you do things you consider wrong, and then feel bad?

Do you sometimes play "stupid" when you really know what's going on?

Do you sometimes stop yourself from relaxing because you feel you don't deserve a rest?

The Child in you can collect "depression" (low feeling) stamps for a free "drop out," "quit," or suicide try. "Anger" stamps can be used for a free assault. You can collect "crazy" stamps for a free trip to a mental hospital. Jails are full of people in whom the Child collects brown stamps.

Even if all your life you have been collecting brown stamps, or bad feelings, you can change. You can replace your bad feelings with good feelings. You do not have to accept brown stamps no matter how often they are handed to you. And you do not need gold stamps to feel good.

Dealing in trading stamps is a *racket* because a collector uses the stamps dishonestly. He does not operate aboveboard. His suppliers may not even be aware they are suppliers. Have you ever been surprised by

someone saying, "I've never forgiven you for that"? You didn't know the person had collected a stamp. Brown stamp collectors jump to conclusions about what a person "meant" when he said something. They hear insults in simple remarks. Both brown and gold stamp collectors look for excuses for their behavior and feelings.

These are some bad feelings you might use to cash in for a free tantrum or sulk: fear, confusion, anger, frustration, anxiety, depression, and stupidity. Your bad feelings usually come from the Child in you.

Take smoking for example. If you smoke and feel guilty, and the guilt leads you as Adult to take action (quitting), your guilt is not a racket. But if you continue to smoke and you continue to feel guilty about it, then your guilt is probably a bad-feeling "racket," in which you can collect brown stamps to cash in later for a free "low feeling" or coughing spell. That may be the way the Child in you attracts attention for strokes. If so, the Adult in you may not realize what you are doing. Your Child can be clever at doing things your Adult is not aware of. One of the purposes of a TA group is to get you to see exactly what the Child in you is trying to do.

Rackets are taught by parents, or by whoever raised you. Most of your bad feelings are probably not "for real." If the Child in you has not taken basic position No. 1 (that is, "I'm OK, and others are OK, too"), you will be in some kind of bad-feeling racket. Your parents will have permitted you to use feelings as excuses. A good way to check on what your feeling racket might be is to recall what happened in your home when things got uptight. Did your parents respond with anger, confusion, depression, guilt, fear, nervousness, anxiety, or Adult action? If they did not usually respond with Adult action, they probably taught you a feeling racket.

Important words: **trading stamps, brown stamps, gold stamps, rackets.**

## 5

### THE WAYS YOU FILL YOUR TIME

To give and get strokes you need people. When you are with them you have only six ways of filling the time. The way you do so depends

on which of the four basic positions the Little Kid in you has taken, and on the kind of stroking your Child wants from others. Your greatest need is to be close to someone in a loving relationship. That is one way of filling time with others. It is called *intimacy*. But there are five other ways, and you use them because you cannot be intimate with everyone. It may be that the Child in you, because he is not sure that he is OK (lovable), is afraid to get *too* close to anyone. If so, you will use the five other ways to fill time with people, even though your Child still wants to be intimate. Since you may not be sure you are that lovable, you may settle for ways of getting along that seem to be safer, less frightening, than intimacy.

The first way you can fill time with people is called *withdrawal*. You withdraw when you are present physically, but absent mentally from the people around you. It is a way of holding out, refusing to get mixed up with others, even to the point of making believe you are somewhere else. Daydreaming, for example, is one way to withdraw.

The second way to fill time with people is by *rituals*. A ritual is a fixed way of behaving towards others, a transaction or set of transactions that almost everyone uses. For example, in greeting your friends, you may say something like, "Hi, how ya doing?" Your friend may say, "Hi, I'm fine. How are you?" You may say, "Fine, thanks." This is a fixed way of behaving, an example of one of our many greeting rituals. Each remark is a "word stroke." If people do not return these strokes, we consider them unfriendly, or even rude. If you have good manners, you are probably a good stroker. You can be depended on to go through the rituals.

A third way to fill time with others is by *activities*. This is usually called "work" and is not usually for the sake of social visiting, but rather to get something done. Since work is often done with others, it is also a way of getting strokes.

A fourth way you can fill time with people is *pastiming*. "Bull sessions" and gossip are examples of pastimes. Some have names, such as General Motors, a pastime in which people talk about and compare cars. Who Won is talk about sports, Wardrobe about fashions. Some pastimes are Man Talk, others Woman Talk. You can name other pastimes. They are usually pleasant ways of exchanging strokes, filling time, and getting to know people. Making Out is a pastime of some teenagers. It may lead to a loving closeness (intimacy), or it may be done without love at all.

Important words: **withdrawal, ritual, activity, pastime.**



# 6

## THE GAMES YOU PLAY

Another way you can fill time with people is by playing *games*. In a game, the Adult part of you does not know exactly what the Child or Parent is up to; that is, the Child or Parent has a secret reason for playing a game. When you are not coming on straight—that is, when your message to another person is ulterior, for some hidden purpose, such as to have a feeling of defeating him, you are playing a game. For example, you may be helping a person with a problem, thinking with your Adult that you are *really* helping him. At the same time your Child may be making fun of him. In a TA group you can learn to see exactly what your Child and Parent are up to.

Here is an example of a game called Now I've Got You. You and a group of friends are watching a Charlie Brown cartoon on T.V. You notice that the only person not enjoying the show is Fred, whom you never did like very much. When the show is over, and everyone except Fred is saying how good it was, you ask him, "Did you like it?" Part of you already knows that he did not.

When he says, "No, and I don't know why anybody goes for that gushy stuff," you say something like, "It's funny that you're the only one who didn't like it. What's your problem?"

Fred will probably resent your remark, and you will probably not like his resentment. You may then say, "What are you getting uptight about? You're the oddball, not me." Crueler forms of this game are called Now I've Got You, You Son of a Bitch (NIGYSOB).

Fred, who may be a Kick Me player, probably sensed that you were not really interested in a straight answer. He could have refused to play by ignoring your question, or by saying something like, "No, but I don't mind your liking it," and letting it go at that.

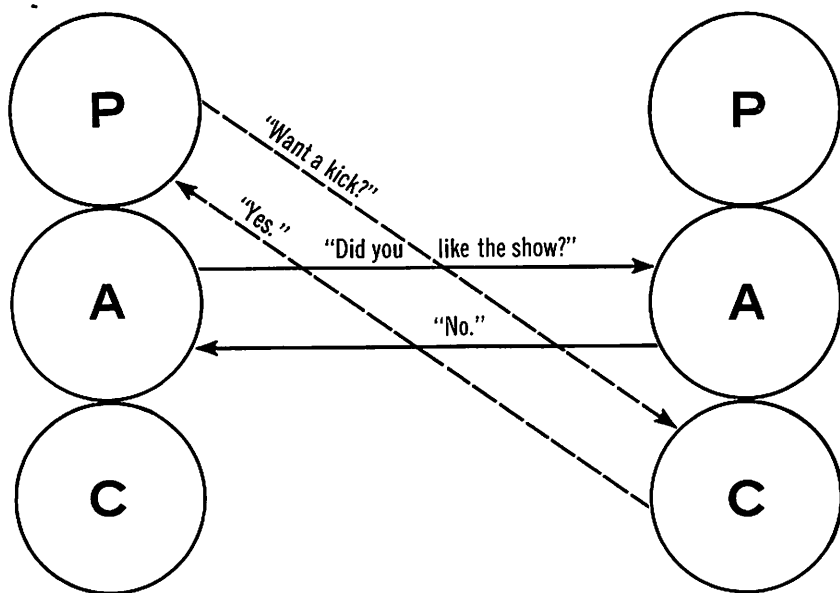
A set of transactions is a game in the TA sense if it meets four requirements:

1. The players seem to have an honest reason for the transaction; e.g., "Did you like the show?" "No."

2. They also exchange secret messages; e.g., "Do you want a kick?" "Yes."
3. They experience a feeling *pay-off*; e.g., one feels superior, and the other feels put down. They collect their stamps.
4. The Adults of both players are unaware they are in a game, although they may become immediately aware when the game is over.

Diagram VI shows the first moves in the NIGYSOB-Kick Me game.

## DIAGRAM VI

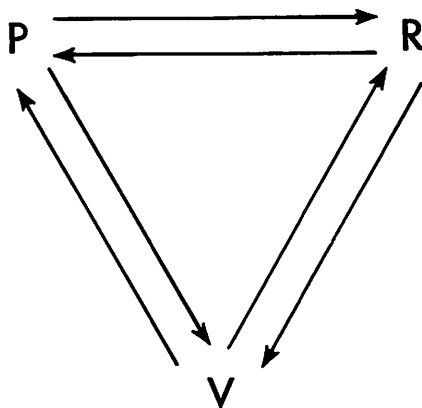


The game of NIGYSOB ends with a feeling of winning over, or of beating down, the other player. The game Kick Me ends with the feeling of being wronged. A Child may want to feel wronged in order to have a reason for revenge, for "getting even." Another Child may want to feel wronged in order to have a good reason for running away, or for getting a divorce. People who want to feel wronged collect brown stamps. People who want to feel they are "right" collect gold stamps. Games that pay off

in gold stamps are sometimes called “good” games because they end with positive strokes, but in an unstraight way.

Players can switch places, or roles, while playing games. The three common roles, as shown in Diagram VII, are *Victim* (V), *Persecutor* (P), and *Rescuer* (R). The NIGYSOB player in the example above is the Persecutor. His Victim agrees to play by going along. After feeling superior in criticizing Victim, Persecutor might feel guilty and try to rescue. Victim could then switch to Persecutor by angrily telling Rescuer to forget it. Rescuer then becomes Victim. These switches go in either direction around the triangle (known as the Karpman Drama Triangle) formed by the three roles. A person may play all three roles at once: e.g., the “martyr” mother who says, “Don’t bother about me. I’m only the housekeeper,” is complaining of being a Victim for having to care for (Rescue) her family, who may hear her as a Persecutor.

### DIAGRAM VII



THE DRAMA TRIANGLE

Children’s fairy tales were invented by story tellers who recognized these three roles in people’s lives. Little Red Riding Hood, while out to rescue victim Grandma, ran into persecutor Wolf, and set herself up to become his victim. But persecutor Wolf ended up as victim of the rescuing Woodsman.

You recognize your games by their pay-offs. When you feel you’ve

“won,” but part of you knows you took unfair advantage, you know you were playing a game like NIGYSOB. When you feel put down, but sense that you asked for it, you know you were in a self-defeating game like Kick Me.

You can choose not to play. The best way to stop a game is to refuse the pay-off; that is, refuse to cash in on the feeling that usually results from the game. You will, little by little, stop trying to play the game, once you decide not to take the pay-off. You may then be ready to drop your racket.

Why would you want to play games in the first place? You have at least five reasons:

1. Games help your Child stay in your racket by collecting or cashing in stamps. You may feel uneasy if your stamp balance is not right.
2. Games help you to keep from facing up to what you're afraid of, such as responsibility, competition, others' opinions of you, etc.
3. Games help you pass time with others without your having to get too close to them.
4. Games help you get strokes, although they may be negative.
5. Games help to “prove” that your Child's basic position (such as, “I am not as OK as others”) is “right.”

Why would any Child want to feel not-OK? No Child would, unless he was convinced from his early years that he was not as OK as others. If he was convinced of that, he will then be out to “prove” it in order to believe there is no use in trying to change for the better. Remember—your Child can feel not-OK without your Adult realizing it.

Here is a list of some common games:

Ain't It Awful	Kick Me
Schlemiel	Stupid
See What You Made Me Do	Do Me Something
Cops and Robbers	Wooden Leg
Now He Tells Me	Alcoholic
If It Weren't For You	Uproar
Rapo	Harried
Creditor-Debtor	Let's You and Him Fight
Little Old Me	Psychiatry
Courtroom	Corner
Take Me As I Am	Blemish
Now I've Got You, You Son of a Bitch	Addict

Some games are harmless, but some are dangerous, and a few are deadly. Ain't It Awful is often harmless, Cops and Robbers (with drugs or guns) is dangerous, and War is deadly.

Instead of playing games, you have another way to spend time with people. It is called *intimacy*, which is a close, loving relationship with another person, without any games. It is the best way to get and give strokes. Married love may be its best expression, but intimacy does not always include sex. Father-son, sister-brother, friend-friend relationships can be very intimate.

Important words: **game, pay-off, Victim, Persecutor, Rescuer, intimacy.**

# 7

## YOUR LIFE SCRIPT

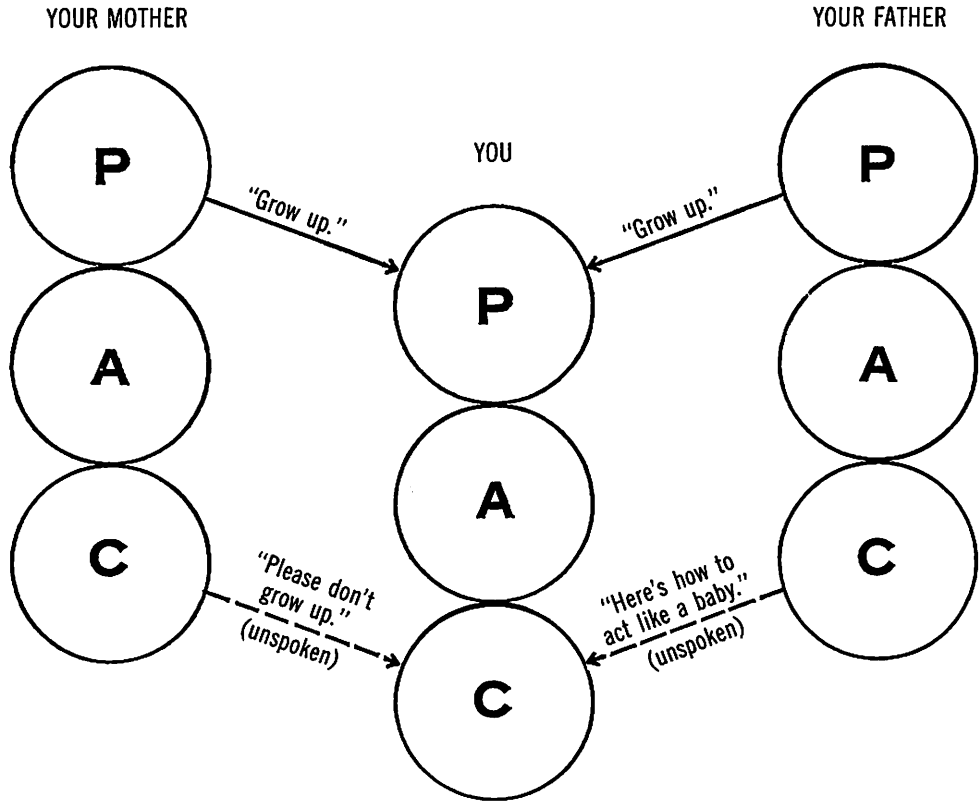
Your life depends on what is known as your *script*. Everyone has a life script. It is your life plan, which your Child decided upon in your early years, and which you are now probably not aware of. You can find out what your script is by examining your Parent messages and your Child feelings. Your script is either healthy or unhealthy, depending on your basic position. If your Child early in life was convinced that he is not quite OK, that he is unlovable, you may want to change your script. For example, your Child may have decided, "It never pays to get close to people," because you tried that as a little boy and got burned. Your script then would be a plan not to allow yourself to get close to people in a warm, open way. You will settle instead for relationships based mainly on game playing. You will get strokes, but they will often be negative, or only conditional ones. You will still want intimacy, but your Child will be afraid to risk it.

You will probably not change your script until you decide to start seeing the Child in you as great, and as lovable, knowing that you deserve all the positive strokes you can get, and that you can be straightforward in getting them.

Everything you have learned so far up to this lesson can be used to find out what your life plan is. Your transactions, your basic position, your stamps, your racket, the ways you fill your time, and the games you play are all part of your life plan. Looking at these will help you to explain why you chose to live the way you have, and what you may want to change.

Child *decisions*, such as, “I will never let anyone get close to me,” affect everything you do now, perhaps without your even knowing it. But you *can* know it; you *can* decide not to lead a dull life, not to head for an unhappy ending. You *can* change your script, line by line. That means you can stop playing at life, and start living it. A group leader trained in TA can work with you to understand and know your life script. He can ask you questions from what is called a life-script questionnaire, which helps you and him to expose your life script. For example, he might ask: What is your earliest childhood memory? What was your favorite fairy tale? What is the myth in your house about your birth? (e.g., “Mother almost died”). What was the nicest (worst) thing your mother (father) ever said to you? What did you feel when she (he) said it? And what did you say to yourself? What you said to yourself after the nicest or worst parental remark may be one of your most important lifelong decisions.

DIAGRAM VIII



You will learn there is no way or no need for your parents to take back the irrational things they might have said to you. But you have a way to reverse a bad decision you made for yourself when, as a child, you reacted to their remarks. You may go over these life-script questions in or outside the group.

Your script depends mainly on your Child *decision* about how you were going to live your life. You may have severely limited your options (choices) by that lifetime commitment. You based it mostly on the messages you got from the Child in your parents. While the Parent and Adult of your mother and father may have been telling you sensible things, the Child in them could have been sending out foolish messages. For example, both your parents could have been advising you to grow up and act your age, while the little Child in your mother was wishing you would stay a baby. In the meantime, the Child in your father could have been showing you how to act as a baby (have temper tantrums, drink too much, be irresponsible, etc. The “here’s how” message of a script may come from any of either parent’s ego states. Diagram VIII shows how it is communicated at the Child level in an unhealthy script). Your mother and father may have told you to get as much education as possible, while the Child in them was bragging about how well they did without finishing school. The Child in them could be jealous of you doing better than they did, without their Adults knowing they really feel that way.

The three sets of circles in Diagram VIII tell you how a script may be formed. They show you, your mother, and your father. They show how Child messages from your parents can be unclear, or even crazy. Messages from the Child of your parents are called *injunctions*. An injunction from the Child in your mother or father is sometimes called a “witch message” if it discounts your importance and advises you to develop a harmful life script. It is not always put in words. It can be secret. For example, your mother may have helped you not “grow up” by never letting you finish a job, even though she might have thought she was being good to you. All of us have received some discounting messages from our parents because no parents are perfect. A TA group is a good place to discover if your life script was a result of unwise decisions based on the discounts.

Important words: **life script, options, decision, life-script questionnaire, Parent messages, injunctions.**

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## WHAT EXPERIENCE IN A TA GROUP CAN MEAN TO YOU

If you join a TA group you will be told the ground rules. Your group leader will give you permission to think, feel, and say anything you choose. You will not be allowed to hit anybody or destroy any property, but you will be free to feel like doing those things, and to say so. You will be free to enter what is called a *contract*, a clearly stated agreement you and your group leader will make to work on *your* goals. This contract will tell him what you see as important for you.

He has certain steps to take with you in TA, as you work on your contract. He will work with you to see: first, what part of you makes the decisions for you? Is it your Parent, Adult, or Child? You will learn a lot about yourself, if you permit yourself. You can learn to treat yourself in your own way, not in your mother's way or in your father's way, or anybody else's way, but in your own way. Your group leader will work with you to strengthen your Adult, especially if the Child in you is interfering with your life. For this part of your group experience you will use what you learned in Chapter 1.

In your group you will be able to examine the way the Parent in you treats the Child in you. You may learn that the Parent in your head has never given you *permission* to be any different from what you are. Your leader will suggest that you shift your loyalty from your Parent to your own Adult so that you can make better decisions about your life. You *can* stop listening to the injunctions that discount you. Remember, they are not in fact coming from your mother or father. They are now coming from inside your own head, from you. You control them.

In your group you can examine the transactions you have with others. Remember what you learned about transactions in Chapter 2. You can learn what you try to do with people and what other people try to do to you. You will learn about the *gallows transaction*, the tightening of a noose around your neck by getting others to laugh at your mistakes, so that they help you fail. A drinker who plays his drunkenness for laughs is asking others to help him become an alcoholic. A shoplifter who gets



his friends to admire his cleverness at stealing is setting up the gallows transaction. Your Child may be skilled at getting people to enjoy or laugh at what you do wrong.

In your group you may recognize and name the games you play with people, the kind of stamps you collect, and the bad-feeling racket you are in. You may discover that the Child in you wants to hold others responsible for your own feelings, good or bad. You will see what position your Child has taken in your life, and what decisions your Child has made. You will be able to see how your Child has your life planned for you. If the decisions that led to your script have not been healthy for you, you may want to make *redecisions*, with full Adult awareness. At one time you may have felt that the best way to survive was to please your parents' Child. You may now want to decide first to please yourself, and get on with being a winner.

A TA group leader is trained to treat you as an important person. You *are* an important person whether or not you believe it. But as the Child in you begins to question irrational Parental injunctions you may fear losing the love and approval of your Parent. As you give up a lifetime of Parent *protection* you may feel depressed; and as you free your Adult to see the world as it really is, you may feel despair. An effective TA leader and his group members have the *potency* to protect your Child as you learn to permit yourself to run your life from your Adult.

By using TA you will find you can give yourself permission and protection:

1. To *replace* any part of the Parent in you that is unhealthy for you. You can learn to be a better Parent to yourself.
2. To *educate* your Adult to facts about yourself that you never knew. You will learn that the more you use your Adult, the more you are able to use it.
3. To get the Little Kid in you to *feel that it's OK to change*, even though the Child in each of your parents may have given you the message to stay just the way you are.

Remember, it is the Little Kid part of you who may want magically to keep the parents around so you can feel protected. Almost everybody's Child believes in some kind of magic. You may be surprised to learn how much of your life is based on make-believe. You can spend years waiting for something big to happen to make your life interesting and exciting, but do nothing to bring it about. This is known as *waiting for Santa Claus*.

After you give up your games, and change your script, then what? You will be able to see in your own way, not in the way you were taught; you will be free to feel as you want to feel, not as your Parent *tells* you to feel. You will be rid of your bad-feeling racket, having replaced it with good feelings. You will have more respect for yourself, and you will feel safer in letting people like you. You will be more willing to accept positive strokes, not only in your TA group, but anywhere you are. Once you start feeling OK about yourself you will stop discounting yourself, stop waiting for Santa Claus, and give yourself a chance to make better decisions. With practice, you will be what you want to be. Remember—you are already OK.

Important words: **TA group, contract, redcision, permission, protection, potency, gallows transaction, waiting for Santa Claus.**

## SUGGESTED READINGS

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